

What God Wants to Give Me, Part 3 - Acts 17:18-21 – October 5th, 2008

- We rejoin Paul on his second missionary journey already in progress, so-to-speak, as we catch up to him in the amazing city of Athens.
- As we've already seen and have yet to see the Apostle Paul will take a unique approach in his presenting of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- If there was a Jewish Synagogue in a particular city, like in Thessalonica and Berea, Paul would go there and start preaching there.

- In Athens however, he doesn't stop there; he goes anywhere and everywhere to reach anyone and everyone with the good news.
- This begs the question; "why did Paul do this in Athens? You could also ask; "How was Paul able to even do it this way in Athens?"
- The answer; Paul was empowered and enabled to do what he did in Athens, because God gave him the empowering and enabling.

- This is part three of a study titled; "What God Wants to Give Me," because I believe what God gave Paul then, he wants to give us now.
- As I had mentioned prior, I could have titled this study; "What I need to be Doing," but if I did, it would place a heavy burden on all of us.
- It's been said that "God's calling is God's enabling." If that's true, and it is, then when God calls me, He will give me what I need to do it.

- Raul Reis (Calvary Chapel Golden Springs) once said that; "God will tailor fit a pastor to the particular area to which he is being called."
- In other words, God will give us what we need, when we need it. This is good news because that means I don't need to manufacture it.
- We're about to see a number of Paul's qualities. All of them are God given to him then, as God wants to give them to you and me now.

1. A concern for the lost (Verse 16)

- While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, he becomes greatly distressed because the city was full of idols.

2. An urgency for eternity (Verse 17a)

- Paul doesn't wait for Silas and Timothy, and because of the urgency of the need, starts reasoning from the scriptures in the Synagogue.

3. A willingness to go anywhere (Verse 17b)

- We're told that in addition to the synagogue he also goes into the marketplace to minister to those who happened to be there.

4. An ability to commit for the long term (Verse 17c)

- In the third part of verse 17 it says he did this "day by day," in other words Paul would do whatever he could for as long as he needed.

5. A readiness when disputed (Verse 18a)

18a A group of **Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him.**

18a The Epicureans, whose aim in life was to pursue pleasure, and Stoic philosophers who believed God was in all, start to dispute Paul.

- This is an eclectic group; the Epicurean's enjoyed life, and the Stoic's endured life. They're on opposite sides of the table disputing him.
- Obviously, the Apostle Paul is not in the least bit phased by this, and actually, if the truth be known, he is actually really welcoming this.

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.** NIV

6. A steadiness when accused (Verse 18b)

18b Some of them asked, **"What is this babbler trying to say?"** Others remarked, **"He seems to be advocating foreign gods."** They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

18b Paul is called a "babbler," and is accused of advocating "foreign gods," because he was preaching the good news of Jesus.

- As far as Paul is concerned, this is to be expected. This will happen anytime you proclaim the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.
- Actually; if today's Epicurean's and Stoic's don't speak this way about us, it may be because we don't speak about Jesus to them.

Matthew 5:11-12 11 **"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.** 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. NIV

Luke 6:26 **Woe to you when all men speak well of you,** For so did their fathers to the false prophets. NKJV

7. An anticipation of opportunities (Verses 19-21)

19 Then **they took him and brought him to a meeting** of the Areopagus, where they said to him, **"May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"** 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean."

21(All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there **spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.**)

v19 They take Paul and bring him to a meeting of the Areopagus, then give him the opportunity to present this "new teaching" of his.

v20-21 They tell him they want to know about his strange ideas. (All who lived there lived to do nothing but talk and listen to the latest.)

- Knowing the Apostle Paul, it may have been for this reason that he went to the marketplace in the first place. He sort of anticipated this.
- It's likely that Paul knew were he to have this opportunity to reach those in Athens, he would need to appeal to their lust for the latest.
- I believe that God wants to give you and me the same anticipation for the open doors in our day that He gave to Paul back in his day.

"This is a striking feature of the city of London in the present day. The itch for news, which generally argues a worldly, shallow, or unsettled mind, is wonderfully prevalent: even ministers of the Gospel, negligent of their sacred function, are in this sense becoming like the Athenians; so that the book of God is neither read nor studied with half the avidity and spirit as a newspaper . . . It is no wonder if such become political preachers, that their sermons will be no better than husks for swine. To such the hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."

Adam Clarke